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Speech for Parents Weekend Multifaith Service

At some point in my Stanford career, when I received a paper back from a professor, I stopped madly shuffling through it in search for the grade, and I started reading the comments first, trying to internalize how I could be a better thinker and writer. I stopped calculating my GPA on little scraps of paper and I started wondering if I could squeeze into the quarter a directed reading with one of my favorite professors. These examples may sound trivial, but they are fundamental to how my ideal of an Education has changed. How I have discovered different ways to evaluate myself as a student and a person. If I had begun with the bigger picture...I came to Stanford intent upon being a doctor and I am leaving to become a rabbi...you probably would have missed the point.

As a senior focused on reflecting prior to graduation, I am struggling to pin point what has caused this transformation. What moments along this journey of personal evolution have pushed me to conceive of my education, my greater purpose for being here, differently? How have my spiritual and academic lives interacted to fulfill every aspect of me, all of Carla? Basically, what has brought me here today in Memorial Church as a religious woman to speak about the meaning of my Stanford education?

The Religious Studies department has been a critical part of this process. I remember calling my mom on the cell phone, after a particularly intense session of my freshman seminar on "Prophecy and Politics in America: The Thought of Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King, Jr.," to tell her that these were the questions that I wanted to answer. Today, those questions continue to live inside of me and inspire

passion. I feel so fortunate to have been in the rare academic environment where, unlike so many students who struggle with how to reconcile their public classroom identities with their private religious convictions, I feel comfortable revealing how I grapple with issues that go beyond the mere rational levels of an argument to a greater mystery.

The Jewish community of Hillel has been the second significant element in this four-year trajectory. It has filled in all of gaps that the academic realm could not reach, those aspects of one's education that satisfy the goal of "preparing one for life in the future"; yet, cannot be measured through a test or writing sample. The network of supportive friends provided emotional stability and forced me to constantly reflect on my choices. The nurturing staff taught me practical leadership skills like how to carefully read a budget or effectively run a meeting. Lastly, Hillel provided me with a home for ritual, that powerful medium for connecting with past tradition, recognizing the beauty of the present moment, and anticipating a better future.

Every Stanford student has one or many moments over their four years when they stop and ask themselves, what am I doing here? My Stanford education has been about rising above the pure utilitarian (ten years from now I will be here) to imagine learning as a good in and of itself, an activity that can fulfill me intellectually and spiritually.